Food rewards contradict the efforts of nutrition education, add empty calories to kids’ diets, and encourage kids to eat when they aren’t hungry. To help ensure healthier futures for students, it is important for schools to implement policies that discourage the use of food as a reward.

There are plenty of non-food rewards that schools can use to promote healthy habits. Some of these rewards include recognition, fun physical activities, and special privileges that are appropriate for each age-group. Review the non-food reward ideas listed below for elementary school students, middle school students, high school students, and PTA/PTO events.

### Elementary School Students

- Colorful pencils, erasers, stickers, toys
- Play dance video games in class
- Drawings or raffles for a prize
- Show and tell
- Extra free time
- Choice of special activity
- Special dress day (like PJs)
- Have lunch or breakfast in the classroom
- Have class outdoors
- Choice of music for study time
- Certificates or ribbons
- Student of the month
- Special section in the announcements
- Special event
- Extra recess time or special physical activity
- Photo board
- Fun movie
- Sit with friends
Middle School Students

- Fun movie
- Sit with friends
- Listen to music while working at desk
- “No homework” pass
- Extra credit
- Earn points for privileges or non-food items
- Computer time
- Chat time at the end of class
- Field trips
- Eat lunch outside or have class outside

“Rewarding children with unhealthy foods in school undermines our efforts to teach them about good nutrition. It’s like teaching children a lesson on the importance of not smoking, and then handing out ashtrays and lighters to the kids who did the best job listening.”

– Marlene Schwartz, PhD, Co-Director Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity, Yale University

High School Students

- Pep rally
- Recognition on morning announcements
- Tickets to school events
- Drawings for donated prizes
- Extra credit
- Fun movie
- Reduced homework
- Late homework pass

PTO/PTA

- Water bottles
- School-branded apparel
- Movie passes
- Special time with a teacher

- Hike or group trip to a kids’ fun place
- Raffle for bigger prizes, such as a bike
- Pool party
- Bingo party with non-food prizes

1. Adapted from “Healthy Non-Food Rewards,” Action for Healthy Kids, November 2011 (Revised September 2015).